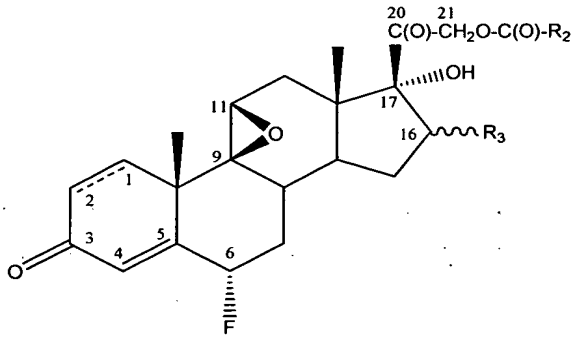
AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in this application.

Listing: of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A process for the preparation of 6α-fluoro compounds of formula I,



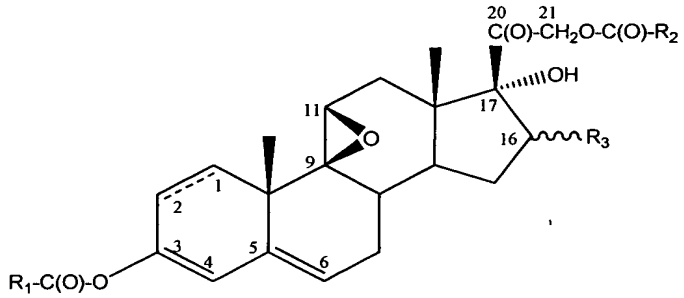
(I)

~~wherein~~

~~R_2 is hydrogen, C_1-C_8 alkyl or C_3-C_8 cycloalkyl; and~~

~~R_3 is hydrogen, C_1-C_8 alkyl, or R_4-C(O)-O- where R_4 is C_1-C_8 alkyl or C_1-C_8 hydroxyalkyl;~~

comprising fluorinating a~~the fluorination of~~ pregnane derivatives ~~in the 6-position with an electrophilic fluorination agent, in an inert solvent and at ambient temperatures, characterized in that~~ ~~[[(1)]] a compound~~ of formula II



(II)

at the 6-position with an electrophilic fluorination agent in the presence of a salt of a strong acid with a nitrogenous base, in an inert solvent, at a temperature from -20°C to 50°C, and under substantially water-free reaction conditions,

wherein

R_1 is ~~phenyl or~~ phenyl substituted with one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen, hydroxy, amino, mono- or di-C_1-C_8 alkylamino, C_1-C_8 alkyl, C_1-C_8 alkoxy and[[/or]] C_1-C_8 carbalkoxy;

R_2 is hydrogen, C_1-C_8 alkyl or C_3-C_8 cycloalkyl; and

R_3 is hydrogen, C_1-C_8 alkyl, or R_4-C(O)-O-, where R_4 is C_1-C_8 alkyl or C_1-C_8 hydroxyalkyl ~~and R_2 and R_3 have the meanings given before;~~

~~is reacted with an electrophilic fluorination agent [[(2)]] in the presence of a salt of a strong acid with a nitrogenous base under [[(3)]] substantial water-free reaction conditions~~.

2. (Original) A process according to claim 1, wherein R_2 is methyl.

3. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1 or 2, wherein R_3 is hydrogen, methyl or acetoxy.

4. (Currently Amended) A process according to any one of claims 1 to 2, wherein R_1 is ~~phenyl or~~ phenyl substituted with one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of fluorine, chlorine, hydroxy, dimethylamino, methyl, ethyl, methoxy, ethoxy and[[or]] methoxycarbonyl.

5. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the solvent is selected from the group of nitriles, N-dialkylated carboxylic acid amides, [[or]]N-alkylated cyclic carboxylic acid amides, ethers and carboxylic esters.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1[[8]], wherein the fluorinating agent is 1-chloromethyl-4-fluoro-1,4-diazoniabicyclo[2,2,2]octane-bistetrafluoroborate, or ~~1-fluoro-4-hydroxy1,4-diazoniabicyclo[2,2,2]octane-bistetrafluoroborate~~ 1-fluoro-4-hydroxy-1,4-diazoniabicyclo[2,2,2]octane-bistetrafluoroborate.

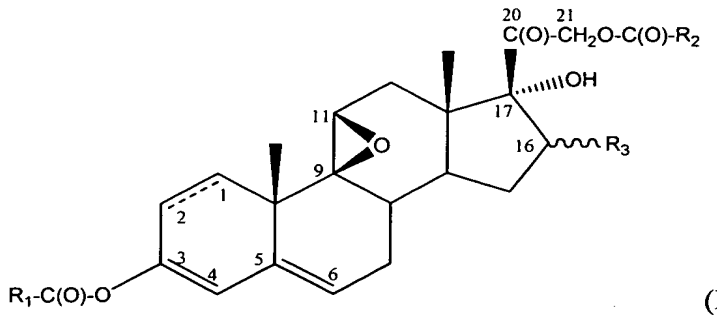
8. (Previously Presented) A process according to claim 1, wherein the salt is an amine salt corresponding to formula III,

$$HB^+A^- \qquad \text{(III)}$$

wherein HB^+ is the cation of an aliphatic, aromatic, cyclic aliphatic or cyclic aromatic nitrogen base, and A^- is the anion of a strong organic or inorganic acid.

9. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 1, wherein the amount of the salt is from 0.1 to 100 percent by weight, ~~referred to~~based on the amount of compounds of formula II.

10. (Currently Amended) Compounds of formula II,



(II),

wherein R_1 is phenyl substituted with one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of halogen, hydroxy, amino, mono- or di-C_1-C_8 alkylamino, C_1-C_8 alkyl, C_1-C_8 alkoxy and[[/or]]C_1-C_8 carbalkoxy, wherein R_2 and R_3 have the meanings given in claim 1.

11. (Currently Amended) A process according to claim 3, wherein R_1 is ~~phenyl or~~ phenyl substituted with one or more substituents selected from the group consisting of fluorine, chlorine, hydroxy, dimethylamino, methyl, ethyl, methoxy, ethoxy and[[or]] methoxycarbonyl.

12. (Previously Presented) The process according to claim 8, wherein the amine salt is pyridine methylsulfonate.

13. (Currently Amended) The process according to claim 9, wherein the amount of the salt is 50 to 90 percent by weight, ~~referred to~~based on the amount of compounds of formula II.